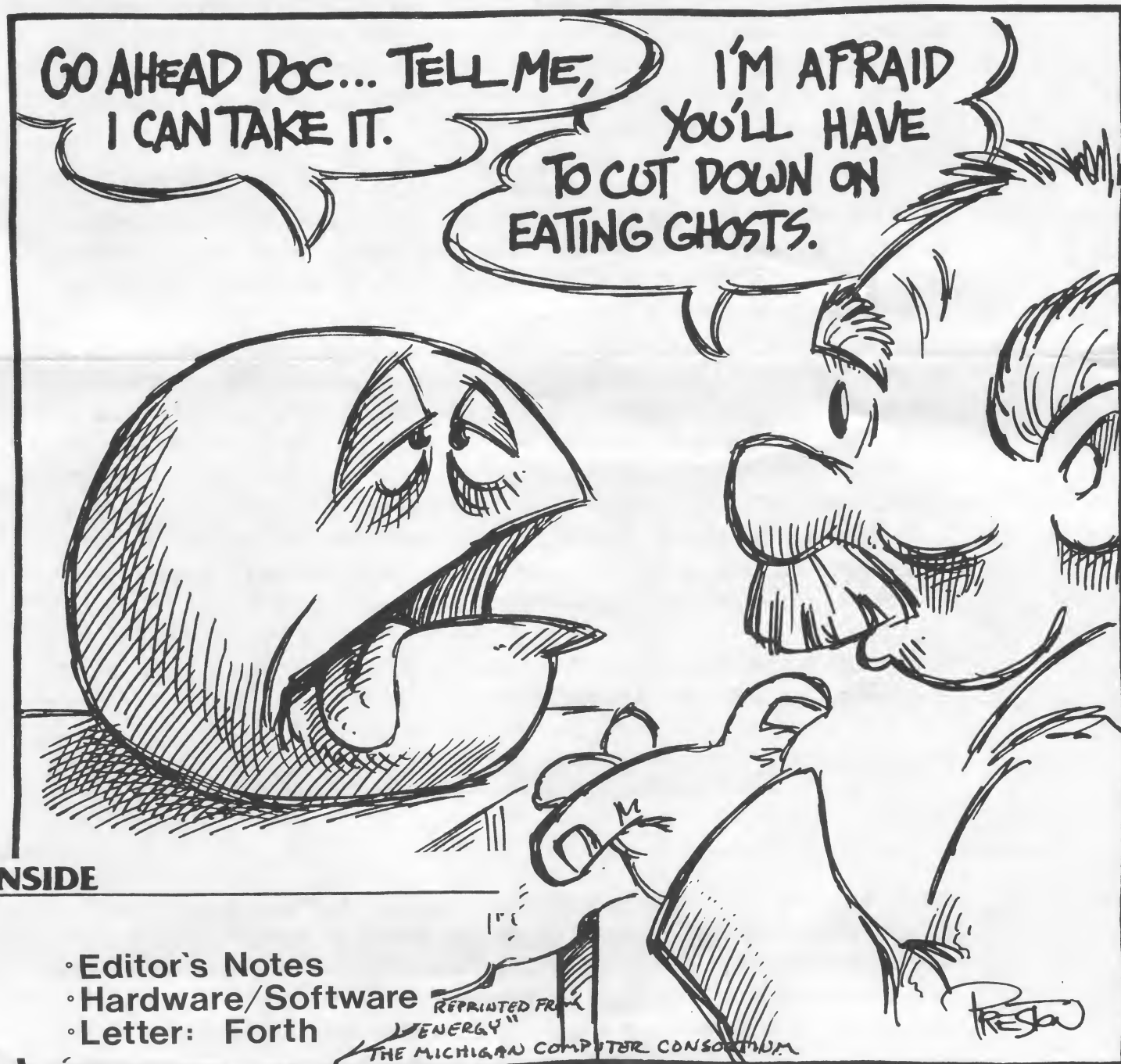


October 1984

TAIG

Twin Cities Atari™ Interest Group

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Final Notes from the Ex-Editor

I have finally decided to give up! I haven't received articles for months so this is it, Phil will have to get his act together and find someone else (only take the job if you want to write!) I know that during the summer it's sometimes hard to think computers but... **THE OFFICERS, AT LEAST, SHOULD CONTRIBUTE!** Without the meeting minutes or any articles it's not worth putting out a newsletter. I hoped that going to 6 issues a year would give people more time, alas I received only Todd's article and a letter to the editor. The promised articles from the officers never came so I've decide to get rid of this headache once and for all.

I QUIT!!

I'm sure that Phil would be very happy to hear from anyone interested in doing the newsletter. I will state my advice once more to those who are interested. If you don't want to write most(read all) of the newsletter then I would pass.

It was fun at the beginning (when I was swamped with articles!) I could put together a newsletter that was informative and (I felt) very good. I was hoping to get more articles so I could use some of my new hardware to print the newsletter. (Laser printer with excellent typesetting software.) I hope that TAIG will recover but it is up to you the members to help it. If the lack of support for the newsletter was caused in any way by myself, I'm very sorry. (In a way I almost hope it was because that means people will resume writing)

That's all I have, so to quote from a very good book *"So Long, and thanks for all the fish!"*

Hardware/Software Notes

By
Todd Burkey

Well, it has been a busy summer, so I haven't had any time to write about computers. My Atari is still the center of attention in my house, although I do have lapses with other computers occasionally. In the last three months, the market was relatively dry for new products (compared to last year), but the products that have come out seem to be a bit better quality than those of a year ago. Some of the products

that I consider unique or at least worthy of honorable mention, I will be covering in this months Notes. These include: Flight Simulator II, Relax, Party Quiz, the SYN packages, and Movie Maker (I know it has been out for a while, but I just got around to looking at it.)

Yes, Flight Simulator II is really out. And it appears to be very well put together and documented. Surprisingly, the speed of animation is almost as fast as it is on an IBM PC (with Microsofts' flight simulator) and the joystick control and sound is actually better on the the ATARI. I had this product backordered around 9 months (a record for me) and the programs still haven't trickled in from my distributors yet (sorry Mike). One note to prospective buyers...I hear that a the original version of F.S.II works better on the 800HL than on the 800 and that Sublogic is working on a fix so that 800 owners aren't put at a disadvantage.

Relax (\$99.95 from Synapse) gets my vote for technical price reduction award for 1984. This is the first under \$100 bio-feedback device that I know of that can be hooked to a personal computer. The device uses a headband for EMG measurement (basically, it measures the amount of electrical activity in your muscles) and comes complete with software that allows you to view graphically or with a kaliedescope your tension/stress levels. The idea is to teach you how to relax in a stressful environment and to this end Synapse also put together an informative book (\$9.95) that outlines different methods of stress reduction. I see this as a useful product for people who like to put in 80 hour work weeks (and their spouses, kids, etc.)

Now for the product that I have used the most this summer. Party Quiz (\$70) came out about 1 month ago and so far everyone that has played at least one game is pretty well hooked. I didn't even care for games like Trivial Pursuit before, but the fast action and ease of play of Party Quiz taught me otherwise. Party Quiz comes with 4 fast response controllers that plug into joystick ports 1 and 2 on the ATARI (lucky for you 800HL owners). The cables are nice and long, so people can still scatter all over the room to play. Basically, the idea behind the game is to guess the right multiple choice answer to a question that is popped onto the screen. You have from 3 to 10 seconds to answer the question (you get more points the faster you answer). In social mode, everyone playing can answer the question. In competitive mode, the first person with the correct answer gets the points. Every few rounds, a lightning round comes up where each person gets to answer as many questions as they can in 20 seconds. A

normal game will last around 15 minutes and from 1-4 people can play (couples are also supported). The game comes with 2500 questions on disk and more are forthcoming.

The SYN packages finally came out after a bit of controversy and probable frustration on SYNAPSE's part (over their broken relationship with ATARI). Luckily, the products don't appear to have suffered. SYNFILE, SYNTREND, SYNCHRON, SYNCOMM, SYNCALC, SYNGRAPH, and probably a few other SYNs I can't remember right now are all well documented, very easy to use, and quite powerful products. I won't try to review the products in this column other than to say that they are out, since each should be reviewed individually (any takers out there?).

Movie Maker (\$40) has been out for some time now, but after just getting one in the other day and using the tool, I am surprised it hasn't been reviewed by now in the newsletter. This is a pretty powerful package and beats anything I have seen yet on the standard IBM PC or Macintosh computers. Basically, this program lets you design a series of movie frames and then animate them. You have control over 1) designing your background, 2) designing up to six players (actors) for your movie, 3) creating the individual animation sequences for each player, 4) composing each frame as a combination of background and players, and 5) stepping through the animation at slow, normal, fast, or a variable speed. The package is very well integrated, so you don't have to read through the thick documentation that comes with the program.

I almost forgot. Infocom has come out with two games that I liked this summer. Seastalker I liked because it was easy to get into and had some nice hint capability for those of us with little patience. Cut-throat I like for the same reason, plus searching for hidden treasure seems to add more excitement to this type of game. I am sure that we will get some good reviews (with hints maybe) from someone in the club fairly soon.

August 22, 1984

Dear Sirs,

In regard to "Fourth Notes" in the last TAIG newsletter, I would like to make several comments. First of all, I'm glad that Bob has taken the time to write his series of articles about Forth. As someone who has dabbled in it a bit, the territory is familiar. But I always learn something new or am reminded of something I forgot about (like the word "?").

Second, I figured out a simpler definition for PADL:

```
: PADL  ( pdl* -- vpos )  
  PADDLE 36 MIN  
  BOT2 @ MAX  
;
```

The changes are irrelevant to the point being made by the example, but it points to one of the problems I've noticed about working in Forth. Forth is a *big* language. It has about 130 reserved words in a bare implementation while Atari BASIC has only 80. Most of these words are pretty low-level compared to BASIC. With so many to choose from, it's a real challenge to find the right word for a particular situation. The rewards are well worth the effort, though!

Finally, since I own a copy of the valFORTH Text Formatting & Text Compression package, and since Bob is not planning to describe it, I thought I would for those who are interested.

This valFORTH package consists of three parts. The first is Text Formatting which allows very sophisticated manipulation of text on the screen or printer. Output text can be centered, right-justified, left-justified, or right-and-left-justified. Text can also be displayed in all-caps, all-lowercase, or caps-and-lowercase (as in a title). And it can do all this in either normal or inverse characters. It also does windows. Any rectangular area of a text display may be defined as a window in which text may be scrolled or formatted just like the full screen without affecting the rest of the display. (Windows only work with the screen, not the printer.) Windows may also be named.

The second part is Virtual Memory which allows messages to be stored and retrieved instantly from disk simply by invoking the name of the message. This part also includes words for text encryption to make messages on a disk unreadable except by the program intended to use them.

The third part is Text Compression which is intended for cases where access to a disk for messages is not possible, such as with a cassette-based system. Words, prefixes and suffixes are defined once and then strung together to form messages. Each word, suffix or prefix only takes up only two bytes of memory each time it is used thereafter.

All three parts are designed to work with each other and may be used in any combination. This package seems most suited to writing text adventure games, but the possibilities are only limited by imagination. One application might be a word processing program which automatically compresses text files to maximize disk space. Another possibility would be a dictionary or glossary on a disk.

Yours truly,

Mark Simonson



542-1027 (evenings)

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Indus GT Drives (w/software): \$330 (while supply lasts!)

Anchor Mark XII 300/1200 modem: \$270 (2 left in stock)

One Of A Kind Items: All in good working order!

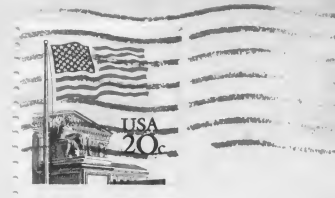
Atari 800 (new): \$250 800 used with switches: \$260

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6824 QUEEN AVENUE SOUTH
RICHFIELD, MN 55423



Next TAIG Meeting:

Sunday, October 28, 1984

Interest Groups

TAIG

- 6:00 p.m.
- 7:00 p.m.

St. Louis Park Rec. Center
5005 West 36th Street
St. Louis Park, MN 55426